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### **Korean Cultural Heritage Protection System beyond Hidden Agenda: A Case Study of Institutional Strategies and Practical Actions**

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#### **Abstract**

This article critically re-evaluates South Korean institutional strategies and practical actions that occurred in the initial stage of Korean cultural heritage protection system from the 1960s to the 1970s. Traversing economic and socio-political top-down authority of South Korean government, I explore how Korean military government exploited the cultural heritage protection system and built a collective sentiment and state-centered ideological consolidation. This investigation enables me to demonstrate that institutional strategy and practical actions of the incipient cultural system got entangled in a top-down approach. The interdisciplinary analysis is based on a case study that exemplifies Korean traditional mask dance drama, one of the representative Korean heritages and employs qualitative methods such as analysis on governmental policies, interview, and observation. This study provides a clue for readers to re-evaluate Korean cultural protection system and eventually gain insight into betterment and sustainability of heritage.

#### **Keywords**

Korean cultural heritage protection system, re-evaluation on initial strategies and actions, top-down authority, sustainability tool, Korean traditional mask dance drama

**JEL Classifications:** J11, F43

#### **1. Introduction**

In South Korea, cultural heritage protection system officially promulgated in January 1962 immediately after cultural properties protection law was launched in December 1961. The system has significantly functioned as an official platform to safeguard original forms “Wonhyeongs: 原形” of the designated cultural heritage

in South Korea. According to *Korean Cultural Properties* published by Munhwa Gongbobu (Ministry of Culture and Public Information) in 1972, this protection system defines traditional cultural properties as follows: traditional properties not only have cultural values, but also become creative products (Munhwa Gongbobu 1972, 23). It implies that cultural properties become historical creations and valuable parts of the Korean community. For the Korean public, the cultural heritage protection system with a long history of almost 60 years has been regarded as a proud symbol of national identity.

However, while I researched on sustainability of Korean cultural heritage, I started to suspect a possibility to involve top-down authority in initial strategies and practical actions of the protection system especially during the Park Chung-hee regime, known as a military government or dictatorship from 1961 to 1979. It was not easy to confirm my speculation because the regime's hidden purpose and management were rarely documented. Also, two Korean scholars, Myeong-seok Oh (1998) and Soo-jin Jung (2008) only stated critical remarks about the government's strategy for safeguarding cultural heritage. In fact, many Korean scholars might be reluctant to directly stand against the cultural heritage protection system because the system is still thriving as the main national system until today. Of course, I do not want to blame procedures of the cultural protection system. Rather, in my view, it is indispensable to trace back roots of current cultural policies for Korean heritage protection and re-evaluate initial strategies and practical actions with new critical perspective. If critical re-evaluation on the past procedures is preceded, actual improvement for Korean cultural sustainability can be followed.

Korean cultural heritage protection system is widely structured by classifying cultural properties in two parts: tangible and intangible. In this article, I narrow down research scope to an intangible cultural asset, especially targeting traditional mask dance drama, called *t'alch'um*. This dance drama is one of the representative heritages in South Korea. For example, a mask dance drama, *Yangju Byulsandae*, was appointed as the second intangible cultural asset on December 7, 1964. Since then, total thirteen of the mask dance drama have been currently designated by the protection system (Ha 2016, 164). Designating a mask dance drama in the very early stage connotes that the mask dance drama made up the greatest portion in the category of intangible cultural assets. For this reason, I consider that the mask dance drama can be a reasonable case study for the intense scrutinization of the early protection system.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the mask dance drama was in vogue among the lower-class. This dance drama at that period highlighted the great weight of sorrow inside the lower-class spirits and helped them to alleviate their anguish and sublimate it into *sinmyung*, which means excitement in Korean language, as Dong-il Cho (2006, 315) explains. I suspect here that as if the mask dance drama was an intrinsic method for self-healing among grass roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Park Chung-hee military government from the 1960s to the 1970s might consider heritage of the past as a key clue to easily mobilize the public and let people

establish collective and ideological integration under the pretense of democratic advancement and historical continuity (Im 2014, 1). If then, my perspective can go on with two questions: How did the military government foreground the necessity of heritage sustainability through a collectively shared sentiment? Where did the government bring this sentiment from? Ruminating on these questions, this study hypothesizes that the Korean military government sought an economically and politically forged sentiment of Korean national identity from traditional and cultural properties. What I consider here is whether or not a Korean national identity insisted by the military government was identical to what the Korean public wanted or pursued via cultural heritage. The answer would be “no” in my view.

According to sociologist Soo-jin Jung (2008), she points out that while the military government revealed its intention to develop traditional culture and to foster national identity through officially reconstructing intangible culture, it utilized these reconstructions as socio-political tools. This statement puts conviction into my speculation; strategies and actions of the dictatorship intentionally functioned as blocking devices by which the government tried to manipulate public interests about socio-politics and personal subjectivity. In this respect, I raise a new angle that the way of exploiting traditional heritage in the initial stage of the Korean cultural heritage protection system have point of similarity with the sovereign-centered dominating ways during the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Confucian society of Joseon.

Harboring this suspicion leads me to demonstrate that the Korean military government from the 1960s to the 1970s did not escape Confucian ideological shadow in which king-centered hegemonic power was analogously wielded in socio-political, economic, and cultural contexts. In the following sections, I examine that the military government with the emphasis on the preservation utilized the spiritual resonance of the past culture to guide the 20<sup>th</sup>-century grass roots deliberately. Therefore, the graft between the 19<sup>th</sup>-century dominating manner and the 20<sup>th</sup> state-centered socio-political and economic force would make room for perceiving a manner that the cultural heritage protection system was strategically employed in the beginning stage.

## **2. Research Methodology**

Qualitative methodologies are mainly conducted for analytical narratives of this interdisciplinary case study. A first approach is achieved by three ways as in the following: 1) analysis on governmental documents and extant studies; 2) interview; and 3) observation. Both the existing scholarly research and generic research on intangible cultural heritage preservation allow me to grasp the whole procedures of the preservation system microscopically and socio-political, economic and cultural contexts from the 1960s to the 1970s macroscopically. Understanding of the procedures and contexts is important to gain insight into the primary objective of the military government behind the scenes of the initial strategy and practical actions. Furthermore, the data from personal interview and observation enables me to look into practical actions operated by actual executors who had

performing experience before launching the cultural system.

Applying a case study of the mask dance drama, a second qualitative approach is accomplished. The case study for this research becomes a powerful vehicle to give proof of the fact that the initial strategy and actions in the Korean cultural heritage protection system included some of the controversial issue, and such an issue might be on-going until now. By employing various methodological approaches, this article provides a coherent evaluation of the initial strategy and actions from the 1960s to the 1970s. The analytical narratives begin with socio-political and economic background at that time, and then concrete analyses are followed with a new critical standpoint.

### **3. Historical, Economic and Socio-political Context**

In order to comprehend what socio-political and economic purpose the military government linked with the cultural heritage protection system, it is necessary to explore the overview of historical background before and after the launch of the cultural system. I further explain how the government under the pretense of equal opportunities constructed ideological integration among the public while guiding people's participation in economic projects and regulating their socio-political activities.

#### **3.1 A. Recovering Manners from Deep Grudges Generated in Historical Events**

Right after Japanese colonization (1910-1945) and Korean War (1950-1953), South Korea had undergone a painful experience about the absence of national sovereignty and domestic dissension. Such grief incurred a collective shock and smoldered deeply into the hearts of the public. This sadness became the national sentiment, "Han" of the Korean. Scholar Jin-taek Lim (1990, 267) defines *Han* as Korea's unique emotional condensation. That is, when Korean people are frustrated by external and internal obstacles, but they cannot solve these frustrations, they gradually accumulate deep grudges. These complex grudges refer as Han. Of course, Korean people did not worry whether or not these kinds of events break out again. Rather, they were fearful of the deep scars left by these events, which interrupted the persistence of Korean history and caused the absence of Korean identity. Even though South Koreans regained the half of their country territory in the early 1950s (the other half belongs to North Korea), they no longer imagined a consolidated community — spiritual or otherwise — that upheld Korean national characteristics with a continuous history. South Korea did not technically hold a national identity until the early 1960s.

The Park Chung-hee military government from 1961 to 1979 did not leave alone the spiritual and mental wounds within Koreans. The government made Korean people's bodies to be political agents to share the spiritual agony after the turbulent events. The government returned to the Korean tradition that had been

popularized before the national convulsions. That is to say, suggesting the importance of public integration to forge economy and socio-politics of a newborn democracy, the military government implicated roots of the public into traditional culture. Meanwhile, the government critically insisted that inequality like the class system was a vestige of the old-fashioned feudal society of Joseon dynasty from 1392 to 1897 and could even cause a national split again (Hwang 2006, 476). Joseon dynasty was established by Taejo Lee Seong-gye, and the Lee family continuously ruled Korean with the name of *Joseon* from July 1392 to August 1910. For the military government, the emphasis on equality served to distinguish itself from the past dynasty and kept highlighting the democratic integration of the public in capitalist economy and socio-politics. However, I recognize that dual attitudes of the military government existed: the government respected a style of traditional culture from the past, whereas it rejected a way of life with class system that was foregrounded for socio-political power structure of the past.

### **3.2 B. Ideological Consolidation Managed in Economic Context**

In *Decade of Success: Korea's Saemaeul Movement*, Edward H. Kim (1980, 35) articulates how the "Saemaeul Movement (new community movement) is the means and the process through which South Korea is attaining modernization. The process is unending as long as people desire to build a better society for themselves and the generation to follow." It means that new economic movement led by the Park Chung-hee government was an approach to modernization. Historian Byeong-ju Hwang (1980, 491) adds that the government started to publish a monthly magazine in June 1972 and used the same name Saemaeul movement as the title of magazine. As evidenced by naming, an intentional goal of the magazine supported the military government and even introduced governmental leaders as new community leaders for all parts of South Korea, who were unilaterally appointed by the government.

From the statement, I am aware of that the military government through the new economic movement raised importance of the integrated contributions among the public and at the same time engraved that leading official under the government played pivotal roles in achieving rapid industrialization across a nation. In this regard, the military government exposed an intention to create positive images: the government is on the public's side and engages all public as active performers in national economy. The military government also emphasized equality when the public participated in the mobilized movement. It eventually underlined the integrated group relationship rather than voice of each individual.

In the apparent intention of the government, it seemed all right. However, if seen through a critical viewpoint, I can say that the Saemaeul movement led by the government was an effective tool to solidify legitimacy of the economic policies that were somewhat oppressive for the public. According as the military government stressed collective sentiment for the state-centered national integration, it created a situation where Korean people could not be disobeyed

against a great cause of a renascent nation. Therefore, the military government exploited economic mobilization to educate the public as docile citizens and control personal opinions against the military government's orders (Kim 2005, 30; Koo 1993, 144). Carrying out the top-down mobilization as a top priority of economy became a double-edged sword under the name of national integration that was ostensibly for bolstering the rapid founding of democracy.

### **3.3 C. Ideological Consolidation Regulated in Socio-political Context**

The Park Chung-hee government proclaimed that the government upholds a liberal democracy. However, it was far from being such a democracy. For instance, the government watched over daily life of the public, created a restrictive night curfew, and forbade men having long hair and women wearing short skirts (Lee 2009, 151). The government's extreme censorship on the press and election also made the public blind to socio-political restrictions of the military government (Lee 2009, 151; Hwang 1980, 475). The government outrightly suppressed not only negative reports about national policies and public hardship, but also supportive news about public protests (Kim 2002, n.p.). Furthermore, the government intentionally established the indirect election system in 1972. Instead of the public, members of *Tongil Juche Gukmin Heoui* (National Council for Unification) were empowered to elect the president. By buying off these members, Park Chung-hee was appointed for consecutive terms in a row (Son 2015, 1). These social and political regulations make clear that South Korea under the Park military government did not meet conditions for a liberal democracy unlike other liberal democracies where the public have their right to elect governmental representatives and express resistant ideas against the existing government.

Most of the Korean at that time felt torn about the military government's constraints on individual rights. Someone could agree with and well follow the government's instructions. However, it is true that many of the public, especially the working class, did not adapt themselves to autocracy. As Cho and Apple (1998, 270) mention, "under the rationalization of overcoming national crisis and continuing national growth, the state asserted that all people as responsible citizens should 'share the sacrifice' for national economic development and a stable democratic society." It demonstrates that the military government imposed the top-down restriction on daily life and political rights of the public as well as economic mobilization. Thus, the military government drove Koreans to tolerate controls from above for fulfillment of the collective identity while reinforcing the government's own position as undisputed, totalitarian-style force behind nationalist vision of South Korea.

## **4. Discussion: A Case Study**

As I have seen so far, the Park Chung-hee regime from the 1960s to the

1970s intentionally forged ideological consolidation of the Korean in socio-political and economic contexts. Such manipulation, in my opinion, was applied to the cultural heritage protection system. For scrutinization on the early stage of the system, I have divided into two sections – institutional strategy of the system and practical actions of the system. The former section figures out institutional resemblance between the stated-centered national integration and the King-centered ownership system. The latter section analyzes how top-down approaches were applied when actual performers were engaged in the preservation processes. These analyses can shine a critical spotlight on analogy between the Confucian ruling system and the military government. It also gives room to re-evaluate that the strategy and practical actions in the initial stage were controversial and did not technically correspond with cultural sustainability as a professed purpose of the government.

#### **4.1 A. Institutional Strategies of Cultural Heritage Protection System**

The Park Chung-hee government began protecting traditional cultural properties like mask dance drama *t'alch'um* under the cultural heritage protection system in the state level. Scholars like Myeong-seok Oh and Soo-jin Jung mention that the military government founded this protection system with its political purpose. Oh (1998, 123) points out that cultural protection policies from the 1960s to the 1970s aimed to stay in power and ideologically mobilize masses. Another scholar Jung (2008, 188) indicates that for the military government, the cultural heritage protection system was a tool to receive consent from intellectuals who sometimes condemned the government's unlawful seizure of political and economic power. These arguments give more weight to my speculation that launching the protection system closely aligned with nationalistic political schemes of the military government – schemes like demonstrating the government's authenticity and overcoming distrust of the public about the government's legitimacy.

What is clear is that the military government strengthened restrictions on private ownership and instead applied the concept of public ownership to the cultural heritage protection system (Oh 1998, 125). For example, while selecting and designating *t'alch'um* as a national property, the government officially renounced that the mask dance drama could no longer come into individual hands. Rather, the regime nominated all Koreans as communal owners of *t'alch'um*. Shifting from private to public ownership looks as if the military government made a radical reform to empower all Koreans as owners of cultural properties. The dual attitudes of the military government – respect of the past culture but rejection of a way of life based on the class system – were well operated in the cultural system. Nevertheless, I argue that this public ownership in the cultural system resembled the way how the military government exploited socio-political and economic

mobilization to induce the public to have no doubt of themselves as main agents but to follow the centralized authoritarian rules without insubordination.

My critical examination about institutional strategy on mask dance drama is inspired by Eric Hobsbawm, who explores how tradition can be manipulated and institutionalized for the national purpose. Through examining cases of large-scale historical movements and ceremonies, such as Boy Scouts, Nazi symbolism and Nuremberg party rallies, Hobsbawm provides insight into how the invented traditions are utilized as construction of politically instituted and planned ceremonial occasions in a new trend. He argues that “[e]xisting customary traditional practices [are often] modified, ritualized and institutionalized for the new national purposes” (Hobsbawm 1983, 6). He also points out that, historically, “invented traditions reintroduced superior and inferior into a world of legal equals” (6). He goes on to suggest that the “invented traditions might foster the corporate sense of superiority of elites rather than by inculcating a sense of obedience in inferiors” (6). In short, Hobsbawm argues that the invented traditions are generally factitious products of modern civilization in that they uphold the illusion of continuity of the historic past even as they respond to new diverse social, political, cultural and intellectual contexts in referencing the past.

In spite of the different territorial background, Hobsbawm’s thought about the invented traditions can be applied to what effects the Korean military government exerted in relationships with the public through preserving traditional mask dance drama. While launching the cultural heritage protection system, the military government put purpose to help the public to understand roots of their tradition and foster collective enthusiasm for historical continuity (Oh 1998, 127). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the royal family and the higher class disregarded folk culture like mask dance drama because they considered it as vulgar performance of the rabble. On the contrary, mask dance drama for the lower class became a provisional venue and time to communicate and harmonize with others. It orally passed down from person to person and allowed all grass roots to be participants without division between performers and spectators. These fundamental attributes of mask dance drama naturally generated a communal ownership concept among the lower class. The collective participation and public ownership involved in mask dance drama would be outcomes that the military government ostensibly pursued. It could seem like a reason why the government selected first and designated the mask dance drama in the beginning stage of the protection system.

There was a disparity between what the government asserted in words and what the government did in actions. According to an amended version of the statute for the cultural property’s protection law, cultural properties must be selected, designated and cancelled, if needed, by cultural property committees whom the government appointed (Munhwachae Pohopŏp 1962, 12). The Section 8, Chapter 1 of the statute also stipulates that the committees must be chosen among people who are at least equivalent to an associate professorship in culture and folklore studies and also are engaged in works and activities about traditional culture for at



least over ten years (12). This clause shows that the Park military government controlled the range of direct participants in selecting, preserving, and managing cultural properties. That is to say, the government did not reflect public opinions about what Koreans regarded as representative of traditional culture. The government did not also allow the public to take part in procedures of preserving cultural properties. In this manner, how could the Korean public perceive themselves as owners of cultural heritage like mask dance drama?

Someone can ask how much the public's personal opinions can be guaranteed to directly apply to the selection process of cultural properties in the cultural heritage protection system. Of course, it cannot be possible in a way. I am not arguing the military government should listen to all the public and allow them to be involved in the preserving procedures of the system. Rather, I want to point out the fact that the military government at least partially entailed institutional control over the public in order to carve the top-down authority of the government into the preservation processes. I argue that such way was analogous to a restriction on possession of land during Joseon dynasty, 19<sup>th</sup>-century Confucian society. Joseon was an agrarian society, so income distribution depended on landholdings (Kim 2014, 1). Kings in the mid-Joseon period gave lands to governmental officials, known as *Yangban* (the upper class), instead of monthly wage. However, kings did not transfer landownership to the officials and, instead, the officials were only granted permission to gather in crops harvested in given lands (Sin and Lee 1997, 196). The upper class employed tenant farmers as subordinated workers, and these workers cultivated lands to increase their owners' wealth from crops. These circumstances indicate that even though the upper class had the authority to cultivate lands, they could not exercise their private rights to sell and buy those lands. Through this limitation on landholding, kings still held the position of unrivalled authority and staked out the claim to all properties of Joseon.

The Park military government's way to limitedly yield possession to the public parallels that of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century kings. As kings had empowered the higher class to manage state-owned lands, the military government only made connections with handful government-affiliated professions to select, preserve, and manage mask dance drama. What is most interesting is that as if kings had kept land ownership, the military government played a role of actual power in relation to affiliated researchers of the cultural system. The researchers carried out projects that were only organized by the government, such as *Jeonguk Minsok Yesul Gyeongyeon Daehoe* (National Folk Arts Contest) and *Hanguk Minsok Jonghap Josa* (Korean National Total Investigation). In this respect, the researchers participated in the cultural heritage protection system were nothing more than hired informants and managers. While the military government established the top-down relationship between a policy commander (the military government) and recipients (researchers) in the protection system, the government did not open a gate to the government-centered management of the system for the general public. Although the military government claimed that mask dance drama is a public property, and

that all Koreans become public owners, the Korean could not be spontaneous participants, but were manipulated under the government's institutional restrictions.

Even though the technical intention of the cultural heritage protection system was not emulation of the king-centered ownership system, the preserving strategy intended by the military government could not break away from the ownership system of Joseon dynasty. It is because the government premised that preserving heritages should be supervised under the government's decision-making. Such a prerequisite for the government's authority continued for the next decade by new political and military power –Chun regime from 1981 to 1988 – after Park was assassinated in 1979. Some part of the strategies has not been removed in the protection system yet. I argue that the cultural heritage protection system in the initial stage from the 1960s to the 1970s conformed to paternalistic structure of the past Confucian society. The government's authority in the decision-making processes of the cultural system exerted effects on strengthening top-down authority between the military government and the public, even between the government and researchers in the cultural system. This authority also supported the government's guided democracy that more emphasized a collective identity than an individual subjectivity. Therefore, there were the flipsides of the coin: while respecting for historical continuity by preserving cultural properties, the military government regarded the cultural heritage protection system as an institutional strategy, along with the government's predominant policies in socio-political and economic sectors.

#### **4.2 B. Practical Actions of Cultural Heritage Protection System**

Appointing scholars as cultural committees of the cultural heritage protection system, the Park Chung-hee military government hired selected performers who experienced learning and performing mask dance drama from their village ancestors. The government then asked them to trace back their experiential memories and participate in folklore competitions hosted by the government. While the selected performers showed mask dance drama in the competitions, several scholars as the cultural committees had interviews with them and observed their competition performances. The military government anticipated that such direct fieldwork by the committees would help archive the whole storyline of mask dance drama into written texts, called playbooks. However, while conducting practical actions with performers, the government still stuck to the top-down authority as shown in the institutional strategy. The arbitrary way of the government reminds me of Diana Taylor's article about criticism of bureaucratic approach of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Taylor points out that UNESCO's bureaucratic approaches existed from 1972 to 1997 for preserving intangible cultural properties. "UNESCO defines safeguarding as adopting measures to ensure the viability of intangible cultural heritage" through textual and visual documentation (Taylor 2008, 2). Taylor

criticizes that UNESCO tends to intentionally objectify and lock intangible cultural heritages in archives due to its conceptualization of the acts of “revitalization and transmission” as production of “archival objects” (2). She attributes this tendency to “top-down approaches” to institutionalization (5). Taylor argues that intangible cultural heritages cannot be fixed in archival works not only because of their corporeal nature, but also because their meanings come from the context in which their actions take place. Practitioners repeat, quote, borrow, and transform corporeal acts, and these acts can only be transmitted through repeated enactment of bodies (3). Her argument emphasizes that dancing bodies become important subjective transmitters of intangible cultural properties. Taylor’s thoughts connect with idea of Tomie Hahn about transmission through bodily senses. In *Sensational Knowledge: Embodying Culture Through Japanese Dance*, Hahn illustrates how movements are transmitted, and how cultural knowledge is embodied through Japanese dance *nihon buyo*. According to Hahn (2007, 5), “practitioners’ attendance to certain sensoria (even particular qualities of sensory experience)” should be prioritized in culture’s transmission processes because the “transmission of sensory knowledge can shape dancers’ experiential orientation.” Hahn argues that the transmission process through dancers’ direct training is important because “body’s actual form and actions embody the inner nature (or spirit) of the person [a dancer]” (43). In similar vein, Taylor considers the importance of spiritual senses in dancers’ body energy as something to acknowledge as well as conveying somatic movements in transmission processes. These spiritual senses cannot be signaled in textual and visual archives.

Back to the Korean cultural heritage protection system, practical actions for national production of playbooks could be seen as if the military government gave careful consideration on actual memories of performers. In other words, the government seemed to seriously deal with de facto performers of mask dance drama and prioritize their corporeal nature as argued by Taylor and Hahn. However, in my view, the Park military government still set limitations on scope of activities to both performers and appointed committee observers. As a folk arts form, performers transmitted and performed mask dance drama on the ground of villages. Unlike the natural performing environment, competitions held by the government were the confined performance space for performers and the restricted research field for committees. In other words, this condition can be named “government-regulated space.” Thus, actual procedures of the government induced both the performers and the selected committees to be subjected to abuse. In such a bureaucratic order of the protection system, mask dance drama should be just objectified in playbooks and later in films by the government.

When cultural committees created playbooks with direct observations and interviewees’ oral testimonies, they wrote what year and month they watched each mask dance drama and what performers they interviewed with. However, the committees did not elucidate what part comes from direct observations, what part were oral testimonies of the performers, and even what part they modified. For

example, two playbooks of a cultural committee Du-hyeon Lee – *Korean Mask-Dance Drama* and *Korea's Talch'um* – included the script of *Yangju Byulsandae* (Lee 1994, 1981). Although the 1994 version playbook was slightly updated, Lee did not mention whether he updated and changed some sections in the texts. As the above statement, this oversight indicates that cultural committees described scripts of mask dance drama playbook, using their own privileged and ideological lenses. Therefore, even though cultural committees engaged in collecting historical facts about mask dance drama, they somewhat contaminated the past experience and memories of performers by their own personal views. While in practical actions of preservation, performers were not treated as important cultural figures, but docile informants under influence of the cultural committees. These committees were also subjugated to order of the military government. All in all, for performers, their status was located in subjugation of the cultural committees by the military government.

I had personal interviews with Sang-ho Lee and Sang-woon Park, who were performers in the beginning stage and afterward designated as human cultural assets. They mentioned a disdainful tendency of the government-affiliated committees as follows:

*"In the beginning [the 1960s], the government arbitrarily handled the Cultural Properties Protection Law and we just obeyed it. However, we would not just follow the law without our opinions. Do you know the Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation [the affiliated organization under the Cultural Heritage Administration]? This Foundation functions as a main institution to protect and promote preservation societies of Korean mask dance, but it tries to dominate us now. This is because the government takes a right to control over the Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation. We [performers] have complained about it ... The government tends to highly appreciate scholars and professors and their academic works. I think it is social and political ill. In order to study about the mask dance, the government needs to concentrate on professional dancers of Korean mask dance"* (Lee 2012, n.p.).

*"I think that the Cultural Heritage Administration tends not to respect opinions of professional dancers in the societies of the mask dance. Instead, it merely follows opinions of Korean scholars, and then often changes the Korean cultural policies concentrated on these ideas. Even though dancers put every ounce of their energy into the mask dance, their ideas are neglected ... I think that the cultural Heritage Administration looks down upon us (professional dancers)"* (Park 2012, n.p.).

As two interviewees revealed above, the military government did not regard performers' opinions even though performers were substantive practitioners and witnesses of mask dance drama. Rather, the government wholeheartedly trusted folklore researchers' decisions to construct specific narratives about mask dance drama under its regulatory gaze. These interviewees also testified attitude of the government toward performers; performers were merely objects who received

instructions of the cultural committees microscopically and the government macroscopically.

Therefore, the Park military government wanted to construct the cultural heritage protection system as a leading cultural organization for national identity. However, while the government ordered researchers to archive mask dance drama and place performers in a subordinate role, the government had peremptorily interacted with both cultural committees and performers. They all were disciplinarily ranked in the cultural system. The processes of preserving mask dance drama in the initial stage of the cultural heritage protection system were shaped by the top-down hierarchical relationship among the government, the scholarly researchers and the performers.

## **5. Conclusion**

This article puts forth a new critical angle to re-evaluate institutional strategy and practical actions in the initial stage of the Korean cultural heritage protection system. To discover a clue of the top-down authority involved in the system, I traversed socio-political and economic policies of the military government from the 1960s to the 1970s. I drew a conclusion that the government exploited the cultural system under the pretense of the collective sentiments and state-centered ideological consolidation. It was for continuance of the dictatorship. Such an intention forged the condition of the initial stage, in which the top-down approaches got entangled in institutional strategy and practical actions of the cultural system.

With support of a case study on traditional mask dance drama, I argue that the military government established a "guided democracy" where the public acted as docile followers under political orders. This political dominance, which paralleled 19<sup>th</sup>-century sovereign-centered system, impacted on the cultural heritage protection system to foreground hierarchy among the government, cultural committees and performers. This is not denying the fact that the military government manipulated the initial strategy and actions in the cultural system to maintain an autocratic position. Thus, the Korean cultural heritage protection system in the beginning stage was externally for sustainability of traditional culture, but internally connoted political sustainability.

Wrapping up this article, I hope that there is no misunderstanding on my critical perspective. I am not pointing that the Korean cultural heritage protection system in the present is still problematic. Passing almost 60 years of history, the current system is already much more advanced and stabilized, which is different from the early stage. Rather, I am convinced that re-evaluation on the institutional strategy and practical actions during the launching period can be a trigger to re-check whether or not any vestiges of the top-down approaches still remain in the current system and pursue the betterment and sustainability of the national cultural system for a future generation.

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